

Dear Honorable Members of the Commerce Committee,

I am a volunteer for the House Rabbit Connection of CT/MA, and I oppose HB 5263, An Act Concerning the Processing of Rabbits for Consumption. I do not want to see tax dollars used to promote the killing of rabbits. Rabbits are sentient beings. They are smart and sociable and have unique personalities. They are the third most popular pets after cats and dogs.

Because of public demand, many cosmetic companies no longer test on rabbits, many furriers no longer produce coats made from the pelts of rabbits, and laws have been passed that disallow sale of commercially bred rabbits in pet stores. Industry leaders PetSmart and Petco no longer sell rabbits. A few years ago, when Whole Foods tried selling rabbit meat, vigorous public outcry resulted in the discontinuation of the sale of rabbit meat by Whole Foods and other stores.

Of public health concern is Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV), a highly transmissible and fatal disease of wild and domestic rabbits. RHDV is spreading across the country, and HB 5263 may exacerbate its spread. In light of the emerging viral threats that jump the species barrier from animals to humans, Connecticut's Department of Agriculture should instead be promoting plant-based markets, including expansion and innovation of plant-based proteins (and eventually cultivated meat), to ensure a greater availability of more diverse, safe, and dependable protein sources.

Thank you,

Wendy Andresen, Volunteer for the House Rabbit Connection of CT/MA
Camden, Maine